

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 12782

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FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY VEST

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EGEN, IT, US
SUBJECT: PROPOSED BUSINESS INTERNATIONAL ROUNDTABLE IN ITALY

SUMMARY: BUSINESS INTERNATIONAL CORPORATION IS CURRENTLY ORGANIZING A GOVERNMENT ROUNDTABLE MEETING IN ROME FOR NOVEMBER, JOINTLY SPONSORED BY BI AND GOI. MINISTER OF FOREIGN TRADE OSSOLA HAS RESPONDED TO AN INVITATION FROM BUSINESS INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT ORVILLE FREEMAN, WELCOMING THE ROUNDTABLE AND INDICATING THAT PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI AND MEMBERS OF HIS CABINET AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN OFF-THE-RECORD INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS WITH THE GROUP. THE TENTATIVE SCHEDULE FOR THE MEETING INDICATES SEPARATE SEESIONS WITH THE SECRETARIES OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC, SOCIALIST, AND COMMUNIST PARTIES. WE BELIEVE THAT THE INCLUSION OF THE PARTY SECRETARIES IN THE PROGRAM HAS CERTAIN PITFALLS WHICH RISK POLITICIZING THE ROUNDTABLE, THUS OBSCURING THE OBJECTIVES WHICH IT WILL BE SEEKING. DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO BRING THESE RESERVATIONS TO THE EARLY ATTENTION OF GOVERNOR FREEMAN SO THAT HE CAN
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CONSIDER THEM PRIOR TO FINALIZING THE PROGRAM FOR THE ROME ROUNDTABLE. END SUMMARY.

1. BUSINESS INTERNATIONAL CORPORATION, HEADED BY GOVERNOR ORVILLE FREEMAN, IS CURRENTLY ORGANIZING FOR ITS CLIENTS A ROUNDTABLE SESSION IN ROME FROM NOVEMBER 2730. IN RESPONSE TO A LETTER HE SENT PROPOSING THE

ROUNDTABLE AND ASKING FOR THE SUPPORT AND CO-SPONSORSHIP OF THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT, GOVERNOR FREEMAN RECEIVED A LETTER FROM MINISTER OF FOREIGN TRADE OSSOLA WARMLY WELCOMING THE INITIATIVE AND ASSURING THE GROUP THAT PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI AND MEMBERS OF HIS CABINET WILL BE WILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN OFF-THE-RECORD INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS.

2. WE HAVE BEEN PROVIDED WITH A DRAFT PROPOSED SCHEDULE FOR THE ROUNDTABLE WHICH APPARENTLY HAS BEEN PREPARED BY THE BUSINESS INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE IN ROME. ASIDE FROM SESSIONS, WITH GOVERNMENT LEADERS, LABOR OFFICIALS, BANKERS, AND BUSINESSMEN, THE SCHEDULE CALLS FOR SEPARATE SESSIONS WITH THE SECRETARIES OF THE SOCIALIST (CRAXI), CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC (ZACCAGNINI) AND COMMUNIST (BERLINGUER) PARTIES.

3. FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT, WE BELIEVE THE INCLUSION OF THE PARTY SECRETARIES RISKS CERTAIN PITFALLS OF WHICH BUSINESS INTERNATIONAL SHOULD BE MADE AWARE PRIOR TO FINALIZING ITS SCHEDULE FOR THE ROUNDTABLE. IN GENERAL TERMS, THE PARTICIPATION OF CRAXI, ZACCAGNINI, AND BERLINGUER WOULD MOVE THE ROUNDTABLE BEYOND THE SCOPE THAT IS DEFINED IN THE AIDE MEMOIRE DESCRIBING IT, WHICH WAS SENT TO MINISTER OSSOLA. IN THAT DOCUMENT, A GOVERNMENT ROUNDTABLE IS DESCRIBED AS BRINGING TOGETHER CONFIDENTIAL

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QUOTE KEY EXECUTIVES OF INTERNATIONAL CORPORATIONS FOR IN-DEPTH, OFF-THE-RECORD DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PRIME MINISTER, THE KEYMEMBERS OF HIS CABINET, TOP OFFICIALS OF THE MAJOR AGENCIES OF THE GOVERNMENT PLUS BUSINESS, BANKING AND LABOR LEADERS END QUOTE. THE DRAFT SCHEDULE INCLUDING POLITICAL PARTY LEADERS WOULD THUS GO BEYOND THIS SCOPE.

4. BUSINESS INTERNATIONAL PROBABLY SHOULD ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT INCLUSION OF THE PARTY SECRETARIES, PARTICULARLY BERLINGUER, WOULD, WITHOUT DOUBT, POLITICIZE THE NATURE OF THE ROUNDTABLE, REDUCING THE ECONOMIC IMPACT AND BENEFITS WHICH IT MIGHT HAVE. IN PARTICULAR, FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THE ITALIAN MEDIA, THE ONLY SERIOUS HEADLINES EMERGING FROM A CONFERENCE IN WHICH AMONG OTHER EVENTS THERE IS A SESSION AT WHICH BERLINGUER ADDRESSES A GROUP OF AMERICAN BUSINESS LEADERS WILL BE THOSE ASSERTING THAT AMERICAN BUSINESS IS NOW GIVING ITS SEAL OF APPROVAL TO THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY.

5. ANOTHER FACTOR INTRODUCED BY THE PROPOSED INCLUSION OF THE PARTY LEADERS IS THE IMPRESSION, ALREADY GIVEN

SOME CREDENCE THROUGH THE INTERPARTY NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE PROGRAMMATIC ACCORD, THAT IT IS THE POLITICAL PARTIES AND NOT THE GOVERNMENT WHICH ARE GOVERNING THE COUNTRY. IF PARTY SECRETARIES, AS DISTINCT FROM CABINET MEMBERS, ARE SELECTED AS DISCUSSION LEADERS, THE CONCLUSION CAN BE REACHED THAT THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT CANNOT CARRY OUT EVEN AN INVESTMENT ROUNDTABLE WITHOUT THE ASSISTANCE OF THE LEADERS OF THE MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THIS IS A DEVELOPMENT WHICH EITHER THE USG OR AMERICAN BUSINESS SHOULD WANT TO ENCOURAGE OR STIMULATE.

6. FINALLY, WE NOTE THAT THE SCHEDULE AS NOW SKETCHED OUT INCLUDES THE LEADERS OF THE SOCIALIST, CHRISTIAN
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DEMOCRATIC AND COMMUNIST PARTIES BUT NOT THOSE OF THE LIBERAL, REPUBLICAN, AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES. SHOULD BUSINESS INTERNATIONAL PROCEED WITH THIS COURSE, THEY RISK ANTAGONIZING THE LEADERSHIP OF THE LATTER THREE PARTIES WHICH, DESPITE THE SIZE OF THEIR ELECTORAL SUPPORT, RETAIN SUBSTANTIAL STRENGTH AND INFLUENCE IN INDUSTRIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCLES.

7. COMMENT: WE ARE AWARE OF THE NEED TO REFRAIN FROM ACTIONS WHICH COULD BE PERCIEVED AS INTERFERRING EITHER IN THE ACTIONS OF PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS OR IN ITALIAN INTERNAL AFFAIRS. NEVERTHELESS, WE BELIEVE THAT GOVERNOR FREEMAN MIGHT WELL BE INTERESTED IN CONSIDERING THE ABOVE-MENTIONED FACTORS IN DRAWING UP FINAL PLANS FOR THE ROME ROUNDTABLE. IF YOU PERCIEVE NO OBJECTIONS, SUGGEST YOU DESIGNATE SOMEONE TO CONVEY THESE POINTS TO THE GOVERNOR.
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